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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PORT AU PRINCE 002392

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/25/2014

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ASEC](#) [HA](#)

SUBJECT: HAITIAN PM REFUSES TO RESHUFFLE CEP; UPDATES ON NEPTUNE

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Douglas M. Griffiths, reasons 1.4 (B) and (D)

1. (C) Summary: PM Latortue told visiting S/CRS Carlos Pascual and WHA Patrick Duddy on September 7 that the Electoral Council (CEP) could not simply be brushed out of the way. He argued that UN Elections chief Gerardo LeChevallier lacked the necessary political finesse and was not the right person for the job of representing the international community to the CEP. The PM proposed creating a "liaison group" of 4-6 eminent persons who could act as an "executive secretariat" to guide the CEP through the process of running the elections. Regarding Neptune, Latortue reported he had five ministers working on a solution based upon the idea of addressing Neptune's case as part of a broader attempt to build a national dialogue. The PM also issued an invitation for a visit by the Secretary in order to send a powerful message to voters about elections. End summary.

Working with the CEP

2. (C) On September 7, Charg Tim Carney, S/CRS Carlos Pascual and WHA Patrick Duddy met with Prime Minister Latortue at his residence. Latortue expounded on the challenges of working with the Provisional Electoral Council (CEP), and offered his perspective on how to improve the relationship between the CEP and the international community. He said the key to working with the CEP was "building up their confidence in themselves" so that they could go along with difficult decisions. Haitian pride is a significant issue, the PM explained, and the CEP could not simply be brushed out of the way. He also encouraged the international community to speak with a single voice to the CEP on electoral issues.

3. (C) Accepting that the CEP has performed poorly, Latortue underscored his view that although the Haitian context is politically challenging, Gerardo LeChevallier, currently the lead UN electoral expert, is not the right person for the job. The day LeChevallier departed would be a good day for the process, Latortue opined. Offering up an anecdote about LeChevallier's lack of political finesse, Latortue noted that it was well-known in Haiti that LeChevallier had joked to a local diplomat that the "best solution for dealing with the CEP" would be to "poison the lot of them." Latortue argued that LeChevallier had poisoned his relationship with the CEP, probably irredeemably, and LeChevallier was not capable of having the sort of productive relationship the international community required with the CEP.

Next Steps on Elections

4. (C) Latortue argued that the electoral dates the CEP chose provide a framework for further progress. He noted that he was exploring the idea of creating a "liaison group" of 4-6 eminent persons who could act as an "executive secretariat" to guide the CEP through the process of running the elections. He wanted people with experience and "moral authority" on the liaison group, and offered up the name of Cabinet advisor Alex Richard as one candidate. Latortue expressed frustration with "international experts who aren't necessarily experts" and argued that it was a grave error to try to reshuffle the CEP. He acknowledged that although it was clear that CEP member Duchemin would have been a better CEP president, it was a mistake, since Duchemin had not been elected, for LeChevallier to give Duchemin the idea that he could be imposed as CEP head over the wishes of the CEP.

5. (C) The PM said it was necessary for the international community to work with the existing CEP, not one that doesn't exist. In this regard, he emphasized it was critically important for international experts to be neutral in their

dealings with the CEP and not play favorites. (He implied that this was a key error on the part of LeChevallier.) Latortue argued that there were "too many cooks in the kitchen" of international actors dealing with the elections (though he had many kind remarks for SRSG Valdes). The international community needed to have a single voice in speaking to the CEP on electoral issues, he said.

#### Addressing the Neptune Crisis

16. (C) Latortue reviewed his efforts to resolve the Neptune crisis, which he called "a problem for you and a headache for me." Latortue said he could have released Neptune by decree but "we might have been forced to resign three days later." He implied that Neptune's fate -- and the prospect of impunity for him -- was a neuralgic issue. He reviewed his efforts to liberate Neptune; noted that each time Neptune was offered release, he responded that he also wanted exoneration. This was a bridge too far for the IGOH, the PM said. If Neptune wanted exoneration from the justice system, his case needed to pass through the justice system.

17. (C) Latortue emphasized he had five ministers (Finance, MFA, MOJ, Culture, and Interior) working on a solution, which would be based upon the idea of addressing Neptune's case as part of a broader attempt to build a national dialogue. He noted that he had heard that Neptune's judge did not necessarily see a good case against Neptune, although he then contradicted himself by noting that there might be new evidence from an international source that was damning for Neptune.

#### The Secretary is Invited

18. (C) Latortue closed by issuing an invitation for a visit by the Secretary, which he said would serve as a powerful political message. The sooner the better, Latortue added. Pascual, Carney, and Duddy told the PM that they would relay this invitation back to Washington.

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